

**Jordan River Bridge will be replaced
But Not Removed
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By Cathy Allred-Her first Coverage of Lehi**

**From Movie role to magazine cover, old bridge has a lot of
history to tell**

She's had a bit part in a movie, been on the front cover of a regional magazine, and has been immortalized in poetry. She's been beat up, bombed, and heard more criminal secrets than we'll ever know. But she is just a bridge.

The Jordan Narrows Bridge invites youth every spring to cut class and jump off into the muddy waters of the Jordan. Time was, the river was too swift and the mud too thick, too precarious for much sport at the narrows. When the river was dredged in the '70's the fun began. But there is a great danger in jumping off the large trusses and it lies under the water.

No only are there eddies and undercurrents; it is a favorite hiding spot for stolen goods. Thieves sneak out at night and dump their booty over the side into the dark water. Safes, typewriters, firearms, and other valuables have been recovered at that spot according to Captain Dave Lamp of the Utah County Sheriff's Department.

"There has been a ton of stolen property found," added Sergeant Danny Curtis. As they plunge into the river, Lehi's youth have been fortunate not to have the discarded items maim them.

Quite a few fishermen have been caught in the grip of the Jordan and died. The bridge has also seen one fatality. Because of the 90 degree angle of the road into her, three or four times a year someone goes over or into the guard rail that is part of the old bridge.

One time a young Lehi woman's car did not make it to the guard rail and landed in the Jordan. She never made it out alive.

Back in her younger years, there was more tranquility. Travelers used to stop by and water their horses and cattle by her. Children in a nearby farmhouse used to listen for their father to cross the bridge; they could hear the echo of the horse's hoofs hitting her wooden floor boards.

One of these children was Eva Colledge Johnson of Lehi. "We would haul water up to the house from the old water trough that is still set by her," she said.

Native Americans would cross the bridge and receive meals from the old Colledge home. For many the bridge was a lifeline to their farms, hunting grounds, and firewood. Livestock were driven(herded) across the bridge and still are.

Later, after cars became more prevalent, youth stopped by the bridge to have "parties". In the '50's, it was a popular dare to park on the one lane bridge, turn off the headlights, and smooch; only to try to get off the bridge before oncoming traffic hit you. And 40 years ago, sometimes oncoming traffic didn't come for a long, long time.

During the late '60's, the Jordan Narrows Bridge was briefly filmed in a WWII movie called the Devil's Brigade. Not long after that debut, in the '70's, someone set a bomb under her. The bomb blew away her asphalt and it had to be replaced.

Of course, the Utah National Guard has been trying to blow her up for years. The 1457 Engineer Battalion in American Fork practiced quite frequently on her. They drive out in a parade of military vehicles, draw up plans, wire her, place pretend dynamite, blow her up and then the next military unit comes and the exercise begins again.

"We have units go out there for weekend training; for a special exercise we

had reconnaissance rafts go downstream and calculate what it would take to demolish her," explained Sergeant Gayle Whatcott of the American Fork Armory.

The subject of controversy even before she was built, the citizens of Lehi caused a six-month delay in her construction. They argued over her location; many people wanted her built one half mile north of 9600 north, where she stands presently.

Seven decades later the controversial issue this time was whether to destroy her or preserve her.

Partly as a result of the heated debate, she became the Cover Girl for a regional engineering magazine called Intermountain Contractor dated Sept. 28, 1992.

Through all the controversy and excitement, ever since she was built, people have come to catch the big catfish that lives under her. And because 24-hour fishing is legal in the Jordan River, many summer nights, campfires burn close to her.

Fishing will be able to continue by the old bridge but the sport of jumping off of her will no longer be possible. After construction of the new bridge, she will be fully restored and a metal safety net will prevent suicidal jumps.

Some may deride the federal government for spending hard-earned tax dollars to preserve her; she is after all, just a bridge. But because of their "grant", the Old Lady of the Narrows will still continue to be a quiet hub of social activity for generations to come.